A

LETTER

OF

Examination,

TO

All you who have assumed the place of *Shepherds*, *Herdsmen*, and *Overseers* of the *Flocks* of *People*, of all sorts in Christendom; to see if your *Accounts* be *Ready*, and what *Order* the *Flocks* be in. With a few Lines of *Good News* to the several *Flocks*.

Wo be to the Shepherds that feed themselves: Should not ye Shepherds feed the Flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye cloath with the wool, ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the Flocks. The Diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick; neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought back that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; But with force and cruelty have ye ruled them, and they were scattered, Ezek. 34. 3, 4, 5. Jer. 23. 12. *Therefore I come against the Shepherds, saith the Lord: I will require my Sheep at their hands, and cause them to cease from feeding the Sheep: Neither shall the Shepherds feed themselves any more, for I will deliver my Sheep from their mouths,* Ezek. 34. 10.

Printed in the Year, 1672.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A LETTER of EXAMINATION. TO *All you who have assumed the place of OVERSEERS of the Flock, &c.*

COME all you (that have assumed the title of) Shepherds, Overseers and Herdsmen of the Flocks of people of all sorts in Christendome, you have had the Oversight, Herding and Ordering of the multitudes of people for a long time; and the Lord hath been as a man in a far Country: and now he is coming to call you to account, and he will require the Flocks at your hands, and the time is near that you must give account of your charge; and receive a recompence of reward from him according to your deeds.

This is a Warning to you all, to have your Accounts ready, and see that the Flocks be in good order, and that nothing be wanting; for you will not have any to meddle with the Flocks but your selves, so at your hands the Lord will require them.

Have you kept a dilligent Watch Night and Day with Carefulnes for their Soules? Have your Locks been wet with the Dew, and the Hairs of your Heads with the Frosts, to preserve their Feet in the way of Peace, and from the Devourer, and out of all filthy and unclean wayes? Have you been as good examples before the several Flocks in all things, walking before them as good patterns? Have ye led them to the pastures of Life, and fed them in due season? Or have yee not played the Careless Idle Shepherds, Sitting in your Fat places, and Lying upon your Soft pillows, at your ease: Feeding with the Fat, and Sporting your selves in your day and time, whilst the several poor Flocks go astray in the by Paths, and are scattered in the barren Wilderness, as Sheep wanting a Shepheard, and as a People lost their Guide; where their poor Soules are starved for want of the Bread of Life? Have yee led the several Flocks to the Fountain of Living Mercies and Well-spring of Life: and caused them to drink Freely, without Money, and

be Refresh'd, whereby they all become Fruitful, and none Barren as the Flocks in *Solomons Song* chap. 6. ver. 5. or are they not dryed up Head and Tayl for want of the Springs of Life and so Unfruitful in any thing that is Good? And have not you in this condition led, and drove them, by your Example, and Perswasion; to the dirty Puddles and Kennels of Sin and Uncleanness? And have not you (the pretended) Heardsmen of all sorts perswaded the Flocks that this is that they must Drink and Lick up whilst on this side the Grave? And is not your Flocks (as you call them) by that means fallen into grose diseases, as Rottenness of Heart, Unsoundness of Mind, Blindness and Deafness, from seeing their Salvation, and Hearing the Voice of the Lord Jesus? And are they not fallen into Lameness of Feet and Hands? and cannot walk upright in *the just mans path, which is a Shining Light*, but stumbles at it: nor cannot handle the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; by which they should war against the Man of Sin, and break down his strong holds.

And by drinking Iniquity, Sin and Uncleanness, is not all the Flocks fallen into grose diseases? that there is no health in them, and become weak and feeble in the Faith that they should resist the Devil in, and overcome him: And have lost their tast, smell and savour in the things of God; and every thing that is seasoned with his Spirit and Power, become loathsome to their tast, by reason of the Diseases and Rottenness wanting Salt in themselvs to Savour withal, by which they should be a sweet savour of a sweet smelling Sacrifice to God, and to season the Earth. And through want of it, is not the Earth Corrupt? and the Creation Burdened, and Groanes, and waits to be delivered from under that Bondage.

And see now what you have in your Flocks (as you call them) to Offer to the Lord that may find acceptance with him, will he accept of the Uncleane, Sick, Lame or Blind? must not the Church that is presented to God be without Spot, Wrinkle or any such thing? And nothing that is unclean can enter into his Kingdome. And have you Shepherds and Heardsmen (so called) of all sorts looked carefully to the several Flocks, to keep them from the spots of the world? or are they not run all over from head to tayle with a Scab? as a Leyrosy. And have you not played the lazy Shepheards, that looks not better to the Flocks, or else the soph steers? For you have said, That you have the care and cure of Souls: and

that

that you are the Phisitians: and your Flocks (as you call them) falling into such grose diseases and uncleanness, are not you the careless Shepheards, and Phisitians of no vallue? And would not you blame and be angry with the Herdsmen of your Flocks? and require your Flocks at their hands, and throw them into Prison till they made satisfaction, that should deal so badly with you, concerning your Flocks and Heards? And will not the Lord do so by you? and is it not reasonable, just and equal that he require the Flocks at your hands? For you have been well payd, for the looking to them; as you very well know, and the Nations can witness.

Have you kept one certaine voice? as the good Shepheard doth, that the Sheep might hear his voice and come together: and not stray and straggle, nor fall into Pits. Or have not your voices been variable, and changable as the wind, and given an uncertain sound? And your Flocks (as you call them) never find a certain voice amongst you; and so are scattered into sects, devisions, and parties, pushing one another with Head, Horn, Arm and Shoulder into the Pit, and into the Mire: instead of helping one another out of the Mire, and out of the Pit. Againe, have you been careful to count the Flocks morning and evening, as Shpeheards ought to do, and usually doth, that none be wanting? Or have you not neglected this duty also, save at fleeceing time? And is not that like the Hireling that cares not for the Flocks, but for the fleece? Have you kept the Flocks that you (pretend to) be Overseers of well marked with the Lambs mark in their foreheads, and in their right hands, that they may be known that they are his? For if they be not, but marked with another mark, will he not say, Depart I know you not? Have you acquainted the Flocks with the fold of peace and safety, and to come into it gently, and rest in meekness and quietness? Or have you not been negligent, and they grown wild, as the wild Goats upon the mountains and as Bullocks unaccustomed to the yoak, and as Heifers snuffing up the wind.

Have you not left the office of a Shepheard? and are not many of you turned Hunters; and hunts the Lords little Flock, whom he hath gathered by his Power, into his Spirit, and hath put them under the hand of the true Shepheard: that feeds them in due season? Do not you hunt them as a Partridge, and make it your Game and Sport to Spoyle and Destroy them, as the Flock of your Prey: and prepare your tongues like Bowes, and your words like

Arrows

Arrows to destroy and cut them off? and you know them by the Shepheards mark from all the Flocks in Christendome (so called.)

And do not you Huntter-like, sound your Horns of Envy and Persecution, to awaken and stir up all of the like Mind with you, and the like Spirit, to Hunt and to Spoyle the Lords little Flock, as though they were not worthy to feed, and live upon Earth with the rest of the Flocks: as though the Earth were yours, and not the Lords: or as if he might not have as much priviledge as you to have a Flock upon Earth, as well as you, as though he had no right, but all were yours? and think you that the Lord seeth not this? and will not this anger him, and kindle his wrath, and hasten him to call you to account, and to reward you according to your works?

And may not he justly hunt you, who have been the cheife hunters of his: and prepare his Bow and his Arrows against you, and mark you out, and make you a hissing, and a by-word to the Nations? and is it not just for him to take the Flocks from you, who have been careless and neglected your service, and duty? and now will not let his Flock be quiet, but rend and teare them. Is it not Justice and Equity for him to rend the Flocks from you, and redeem them from your mouths, who will not suffer his, to receive the Law at his mouth whom he hath ordained a Priest for ever; whose Lipps preserve knowledge? Will not the just Principle in you answer to his Justice, that comes upon you with Equity to take the Flocks from you, and lay you aside like an old Alminack, and gather the Flocks, and put them under the hand of one Shepheard, Christ Jesus the good Shepheard, who will bring them to the fresh pastures of Life, and feed them in due season, and cause them to hear his voice, and to know it, and with his, fould, and to ly down in it, in quietness, meekness and patience; where none shall make them afraid: preserving from the storm, and from the heat, and and will bring them to the Well of clean water, and Fountain of living mercies, and cause them to wash and be clean, and to drink and be refreshed, that they may no longer be barren in fruits of holiness, but may bring forth to Gods glory; and will anoint their eyes, with eye salve, and open their blind eyes, and then they will see you to be blind guides, and bless the Lord that redeems them from you, and he will give them Balsome and pretious Oyntment, even virtue that goes out of him, the good phisitian that will cure their Spots, Scabs and Leprosies, which ran all over them whilst

they

they were under your hands, and will purge their corruptions, and cure the evil diſeaſes of ſin and iniquity, by which death hath had dominion, and will give them ſaving health, and heal their backſlidings, and open the miſtery of his Kingdom to them, circumciſing their hearts, and eares, and cauſing them to underſtand thoſe ſecrets, which are hidden from the wiſdom of this World, and bring them out of the many ways, into the one Way, Chriſt Jeſus the Way to God, and out of the many ſects, deviſions and parties, holes, bryars, thorns and thickets, which they are fallen into, and been intangled in, in the cloudy and dark day they have been in, whilſt under your hands: and ſet his Name and his Fathers Name upon them, and give them the Seal of the new Covenant, that they may know and be known, that they are his, whom he hath purchaſed with his pretious blood, and redeemed, ſearched and ſought out, even as a good Shepheard, *and bring them to the Mountain of the houſe of the God of* Jacob, *and will teach them of his wayes,* Iſa. 2*d. chap.* 3*d. vers. And he will watch over them who ſleeps not, nor ſlumbers not*; and will work a reformation in the Nations, and bring them to the one true Church, which is in God, Founded and Built upon the ſure Foundation which God hath laid, and coupled together; as with the hand of a wiſe workman, into the Fellowſhip of the one Body; and Chriſt Jeſus the Head, which ſupplys the whole body, with all things needful, to build them up in their moſt pretious Faith, which gives them victory over the man of ſin, and renews into the true worſhip of God in the Spirit and in the Truth, and to the uniformity in the ſpiritual worſhip, and a true conformity to it, by his Law of the Spirit written in the heart, where Chriſt is Prieſt according to the promiſe of the Father, Miniſter and Biſhop of the Soul, who miniſters Life, Peace and Comfort unto them, and renews his holy and heavenly Ordinances in the Church, baptizing into one Spirit, and into the one Faith that works by Love, and purifies the heart, giving a white Stone, and in it a new Name, and the ſinceer Milk of the Word, officiateing the Prieſts offices, in the Church of the firſt Borne; prepareing the Alter, and ſpreading the Table with fine white Linnen, which is his Righteouſneſs, and prepares the Bread for his Church, and fills their Cup with the new Wine, that they may all drink of the Cup of bleſſings, which is the communion of his Blood, and may all eat of the one Bread, which is the communion of his Body, and

his

his Body is Bread indeed, and his Blood is drink indeed, and this is that that gives Life; and without it they cannot have Life, and this is free without money, which the Lords Table is furnished with, and is inviting the People, and gathering the Nations to it, from your chargable Tables, for you have sold them Bread, Wine and Water at a dear rate, and he will feed them with all things necessary, as one Houshold, of one Faith, and as one Family, Christ Jesus, greater then *Solomon* to Rule them, as their Lord and Master, setting up and renewing family Duties amongst them, to stand upon their watch, and to resist every appearance of evil, and to Pray with the Spirit, and with Understanding, and to Sing with the Spirit and with Understanding also, and he shall rule whose right it is, and the Government is upon his Shoulders, whose Kingdome is Everlasting and of whose Government there shall be no end, and the Lord will performe this, to reform the Nations, to bring them to Uniformity, and true Conformity to his dear Son.

William Edmondson.

Jamaica, the 24th. of the 12th. Month 1671.

5 AP 58

THE END.